

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
351 North Mountain View Avenue, Third Floor ♦ San Bernardino, CA 92415-0010
(909) 387-9146 ♦ Fax (909) 387-6228



JIM LINDLEY, M.P.A.
Public Health Director

PAULA MEARES-CONRAD
Interim Assistant Director of Public Health

MAXWELL OHIKHUARE, M.D.
Health Officer

CONTACT: Maxwell Ohikhuare, M.D.
Health Officer,
(909) 387-6218

September 4, 2008
NR # 08-98
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIRST DEATH FROM WEST NILE VIRUS IN SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

San Bernardino. On August 27, 2008, a forty-eight year old Rialto resident died of West Nile Virus (WNV). This unfortunate event is San Bernardino County's first death from WNV, and the third death statewide in 2008. The Rialto man also suffered from pre-existing medical conditions which increase the possibility of dying from the virus. It is unknown exactly where he contracted the virus.

A total of 132 cases have been reported in California at present this year, of which San Bernardino County currently accounts for 5. The state has had only two other WNV deaths in 2008 that occurred in Orange County. There were 380 human cases of WNV identified in California during 2007, and 21 deaths. Last year there were 5 WNV cases in San Bernardino County and no deaths.

San Bernardino County Health Officer, Maxwell Ohikhuare, M.D., said, "While the vast majority of people who contract West Nile Virus recover, deaths, however rare, do occur. We are saddened at this gentleman's death and this underscores how serious West Nile Virus can be. I encourage San Bernardino County residents to take measures to minimize exposure to mosquitoes and reduce the chance of becoming infected."

Since WNV is transmitted to humans through a mosquito bite, The San Bernardino County Vector Control Program is focusing on eliminating mosquitoes and mosquito-breeding sites. In areas where WNV is found, Vector Control monitors and eliminates mosquito-breeding. Mosquito traps placed throughout the county are monitored regularly for an increase in mosquito population. "The relatively low number of cases for San Bernardino County can partly be attributed to aggressive vector control measures to protect the public's health," Dr. Ohikhuare said.

Page 1 of 2

MARK UFFER
County Administrative Officer

Board of Supervisors
BRAD MITZELFELT.....First District DENNIS HANSBERGER.....Third District
PAUL BIANE.....Second District GARY C. OVITT.....Fourth District
JOSIE GONZALES.....Fifth District

Riverside County has reported 23 human cases of WNV in 2008, Orange County has had 35 cases, and Los Angeles County has identified 34 cases.

To prevent further cases of WNV, the Department of Public Health encourages people to follow these precautions:

- **DAWN AND DUSK** – Mosquitoes that carry WNV bite in the early morning and evening so it is important to wear repellent at this time. Make sure your doors and windows have tight-fitting screens to keep out mosquitoes. Repair or replace screens that are torn or have holes.
- **DEET** – Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaradin, Oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535 according to label instructions. Repellents keep the mosquitoes from biting you. DEET can be used safely on infants and children 2 months of age and older.
- **DRESS** – Wear clothing that reduces the risk of skin exposure. When outdoors, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- **DRAIN** – Mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water. Remove all sources of standing water on your property, including flower pots, old car tires, rain gutters and pet bowls. If you have a pond, use mosquito fish or commercially available products to eliminate mosquito larvae.

Most people who are infected with WNV will not feel sick. Anyone 50 years of age and older has a higher chance of illness and is more likely to develop serious symptoms when infected with WNV. Recent data also show that those with diabetes and/or hypertension are at greatest risk for serious illness. Symptoms of WNV include fever, rash, headaches and body aches. The public is advised to seek medical attention if they experience symptoms that could be from WNV.

Since horses can also be infected with WNV, horse owners are advised to contact their veterinarians about timely vaccinations.

San Bernardino County residents are encouraged to report standing bodies of water, including neglected pools or ponds to the San Bernardino County Vector Control Program at **800-44-ABATE (800-442-2283)**. Residents who live in Chino, Chino Hills, Ontario or Rancho Cucamonga should report stagnant water to the West Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District at (909) 635-0307. People can also help with monitoring activities by reporting dead birds to the State West Nile Virus toll-free hotline at **(877) WNV-BIRD or online at www.westnile.ca.gov**.

####